

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 05788 141437Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 MC-02 ACDA-07 EB-07 AID-05 IGA-02 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0778

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, JO, SU, US

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER ON HAWK AIR DEFENSE

REF: AMMAN 1985

1. LONDON TIMES OF APRIL 14 CARRIES AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ZEID RIFAI BY ITS CORRESPONDENT EDWARD MORTIMER. STORY CARRIED ON P. 2 UNDER HEADLINE, "JORDAN SWITCHING US ARMS ORDER TO RUSSIA". PERTINENT EXTRACTS FOLLOW:

2. BEGIN TEXT: "JORDAN HAS ABANDONED ITS PLAN TO PURCHASE AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM FROM THE UNITED STATES AND NOW INTENDS TO SEEK ONE FROM THE SOVIET UNION. THIS WAS STATED TO THE TIMES BY ZEID RIFAI, THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER, IN AN INTERVIEW IN LONDON THIS WEEK.

IN THE INTERVIEW MR. RIFAI SAID THE CANCELLATION OF THE AIR DEFENSE DEAL--WHICH WOULD HAVE INVOLVED FOUR ADVANCED HAWK MISSILE BATTERIES AND 100 VULCAN GUNS WAS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 05788 141437Z

RESULT OF DELAYS CAUSED BY OPPOSITION FROM THE UNITED

STATES CONGRESS. BY THE TIME CONGRESS FINALLY APPROVED THE DEAL, PRICES HAD RISEN TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE BILL PRESENTED TO JORDAN IN JANUARY OF \$792M (430 MILLION POUNDS) WAS MORE THAN DOUBLE THE ORIGINAL AMOUNT WHICH SAUDI ARABIA HAD AGREED TO FINANCE.

'THE SAUDIS DID NOT FIND IT POSSIBLE TO FINANCE THE WHOLE DEAL AT THE NEW PRICES, AND THEREFORE WE CONSIDER THE DEAL WITH THE UNITED STATES AS OFF', MR. RIFAI SAID. 'THE ONLY OTHER SOURCE WHICH COULD SUPPLY AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM AT REASONABLY MODERATE PRICES AND WITH AN ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY SCHEDULE WAS THE SOVIET UNION.'

COMPARABLE EUROPEAN SYSTEMS, HE SAID, WERE TOO EXPENSIVE AND WOULD TAKE TOO LONG TO DELIVER. 'THE ONLY OPTION NOW IS THE SOVIET UNION, AND WE PLAN TO REACTIVATE THE PRELIMINARY TALKS WITH THEM AS SOON AS WE RETURN.'

HE DID NOT EXPECT THE SAUDIS TO MAKE ANY DIFFICULTY ABOUT A SOVIET DEAL. THE AMERICAN DEAL WOULD CANCEL ITSELF AUTOMATICALLY WHEN THE TIME LIMIT FOR THE DOWN PAYMENT EXPIRED AT THE END OF THIS MONTH. JORDAN WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO PAY BETWEEN \$10M AND \$12M IN DAMAGES FOR WORK WHICH HAD ALREADY STARTED." END TEXT

ARMSTRONG

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